Pam. C. Amer.

1312

INTERNATIONAL CONCILIATION

Published monthly by the
American Association for International Conciliation
Entered as second class matter at New York, N. Y.
Postoffice, February 23, 1909, under act of July 16, 1894

THE UNITED STATES AND MEXICO

BY

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MAY, 1910, No. 30

American Association for International Conciliation
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New York City

The Executive Committee of the Association for International Conciliation wish to arouse the interest of the American people in the progress of the movement for promoting international peace and relations of comity and good fellowship between nations. To this end they print and circulate documents giving information as to the progress of these movements, in order that individual citizens, the newspaper press, and organizations of various kinds may have readily available accurate information on these subjects.

For the information of those who are not familiar with the work of the Association for International Conciliation, a list of its publications will be found on page 23.

Its mines were the bait which first tempted foreign capital to enter Mexico, but neither foreigners themselves nor their capital were welcome while Mexico was under Spanish rule. English commercial agents were allowed to reside in Vera Cruz. Their ostensible duty was to manage the African Slave trade, which was exclusively in English hands. But as Spain made no iron or steel or woolen goods, these merchants carried on a profitable business in these commodities. Pablo Macedo in *La Evolution Mercantil* (Page 35), estimates that in the last period of Spanish rule from 1796 to 1820 there were imported into Vera Cruz:

Spanish and colonial goods imported from other Spanish colonies	$35,000,000 or 13.50%
Spanish goods imported direct	$112,400,000 or 43.40%
Foreign goods	$111,800,000 or 43.10%
Total	$259,200,000 or 100.00%

But Spain carefully guarded her mines from all foreign intrusion. They belonged to the Crown, but the King (by Section 2 of Chapter V of the Royal

Ordinance of the Mines), "without separating them from the royal patrimony," grants them "to subjects in property and possessions," under certain conditions. The possessor could dispose of his mine by will or legacy or sale, but only to Spanish subjects. (Charles Thomson's *The Ordinances of the Mines,* Page 55.)

The Spanish republics of the West Hemisphere have all without exception adopted the policy of distinguishing between the ownership of the surface lands, which the State disposes of absolutely, and the ownership of the minerals, of which the State retains possession. All likewise continue, as did old Spain, to levy a percentage on the precious metals extracted. But all Spanish America has abandoned old Spain's selfish desire to reserve the enjoyment of her mines to Spanish subjects. The first step towards revising in the direction of greater liberality, the old Spanish code was the passage by the Mexican Congress of the mining law of 1823. The new statute enacted that "The repeal shall extend only so as to enable foreigners to contract with mine owners for supplying them with capital in all the modes which are usual in such contracts, upon the terms that shall be most convenient to both parties, so that they may even acquire in property shares in the concern to which they supply capital."

The famous mines of Mexico had yielded up to the beginning of the last century $1,500,000,000. But they had almost without exception been closed when the revolution broke out in 1810. In the interval be-

tween 1810 and the passage of the first enabling act of 1823 they had become flooded, the primitive machinery with which they had been operated had decayed, and the mine owners had been impoverished by their struggle with Spain and by perpetual internal strife.

The Permission to enlist foreign capital was responded to in 1824 by three English associations, "*The United Mexican Association*" with a capital of £240,000, to build a custom smelter as well as to purchase mines (See Taylor's Selections, Page XI), the "Anglo-Mexican Associates," with a capital of £1,000,000, to work mines in the Guanajuato District, including the celebrated Valenciana, and the Purrissima in the Real de Catorce, and the company of the "Adventurers in the Mines of Real del Monte."

Thus commenced, as soon as even partial political stability was secured, the influx of capital into Mexico. Since then the mining laws have been made so liberal that they hardly discriminate between foreigners and natives. But they are based on the fundamental Spanish principle already referred to, that the State maintains perpetual ownership of the minerals. Under Mexican law the Federal Government leases the mineral ground but the tenant's occupancy is secure as long as he pays the rent and observes the other conditions imposed. The common law, which we derive from England, vests in the owner of the surface the ownership of all beneath the surface. But it is a debatable question whether our system or the Spanish conserves best the mineral resources, and

makes the fairer return to the people at large for the enormous values they give away for an insignificant price, when they sell outright their mineral lands. The Mexican government, following Spanish precedent, derives additional revenue by taxing the output. That being the law and custom in Mexico, the State has every motive for encouraging the development of the country's mines and enlisting the assistance of foreign capital. The invitation has been accepted, and foreign corporations have discovered that, besides yielding what alone the conquerors valued—silver and gold—Mexico is rich in copper and lead, and will some day, when other sources of iron ore are becoming exhausted, supply us with what we now sell her—iron and steel.

The number of foreign mining companies in Mexico is 1,116. Of these, about 57 per cent. are controlled by citizens of the United States. It is not possible to segregate the production of foreign mining companies from the total, which has steadily grown till Mexico leads the world in the production of silver, with 61,147,203 ounces in 1907—ranks fifth in the production of gold, which until recently was a neglected branch of mining, and has rapidly risen to second place in the production of copper, that for 1907 having been 61,127 tons. She is only exceeded in the production of lead by the United States, Spain, Germany and Australia. The French Company at Boleo, from its mines in Lower California, took the lead in copper mining, but American companies now

make about 75 per cent. of Mexico's total. And lead smelting is almost entirely in American hands.

John Taylor, in introducing Mexican mining to the British public, said in 1824: "The Mexican people will eventually be much benefited by the application and use of our steam engines, and probably by some other improvements we may carry with them. They invite our assistance in a friendly manner, and there is no doubt that the enlightened part of the nation will regard us favorably. We ought to do our part to deserve their confidence and support. A connection may thus be established which may be beneficial to the present and future generations of both countries." (John Taylor's Selections from the works of Baron de Humboldt, 1824, page 419.)

Mr. Taylor's anticipations have been fulfilled so far as they refer to reciprocal material benefits, and his hopes have not been contradicted that besides financial gain international amity has in the long run accrued through the commercial intercourse of foreign investors and the people of Mexico.

It was chiefly English capital that in those early days embarked in Mexican mines or furnished machinery to native mining companies. There was not then money in the United States available for foreign investment. In the next decade the Texas question was settled adversely to Mexico, and in the fourth decade of the century the Mexican War broke out, resulting in the loss of California by Mexico. The neighboring republics were not drawn together by

these successive conflicts, but it was another war which obliterated the rancour and distrust on the part of the Mexicans against the United States. When Mexico was invaded by the French, and Maximilian endeavored to found a Mexican Empire, though the United States were involved in their own terrible internal struggle, sympathy went forth abundantly to Mexico, and it was perfectly understood that this fraternal feeling would find expression in acts conformably to the Monroe Doctrine, if necessity required. From the date of the Maximilian invasion, Mexico has recognized the United States as an ally and not as an enemy, and therefore the current of American money commenced to flow southward across the international boundary. Since then the financial rivulet has become a flood of such volume as not unnaturally to excite some uneasiness in the Mexican mind. American money is now building most of the Mexican railroads and working not only old gold and silver mines, but proving that the rocks of the Republic are rich in the inferior metals, which in the past were neglected, partly because they could not have been profitably recovered on a large scale without the aid of railroad transportation.

From Dr. Peñafiel's Statistical Tables of the Movement of Mining Companies, we gather that the average annual investment in mines during the sixteen years between 1892-1907 has been, reduced to gold, $7,000,000, of which Mexico contributed about 51 per cent. and the United States 34 per cent. But dur-

ing that period substantially all the large metallurgical establishments have been built by American capital, and are managed by Americans. United States Consul General Barlow estimated in 1902 that there was then $80,000,000 of American capital invested in mines. That figure is under the mark to-day. The impression made by the heavy American investment must be measured not only by dollars and cents, but by the scale on which the American mining and smelting operations are conducted. This involves the concentration of population at certain centers under distinctly American influences, which at times creates disquietude in the public mind.

But the investments made by the United States in Mexican mines are insignificant as compared with the money which this country has contributed to the building of Mexican railroads. Looking backward to the progress of railroad building in the Republic, we find that the first railroad, that from Vera Cruz to the City of Mexico, owed its existence to English enterprise; and though in the interval between that date and to-day most of the railroad work has been done by Americans, the latest completed road, that across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, with its well equipped termini on the Atlantic and Pacific, has been built for and leased from the Mexican Government by an English firm. As soon, however, as the Santa Fe Railroad reached El Paso, the Mexican Central was commenced as a road, allied to the Santa Fe, and built from El Paso to the City of Mexico between 1882

and 1884. And the Santa Fe Railroad itself subsequently reached the Gulf of California at Guaymas by the Sonora Railroad. This branch of the Santa Fe, however, terminated at Benson, on the Southern Pacific, in Arizona, and has since been secured by the Southern Pacific in exchange for a California connection. It thus has become the nucleus of the extensive system which the Southern Pacific is building along the West Coast of Mexico, with the object not only of traversing the deltas of the Yaqui, Mayo and Fuerte Rivers, and reaching their boundless agricultural possibilities, and of developing the mineral wealth of Sonora and Sinaloa, but of linking the Capital and the Plateau States with the Western States. It will thus afford to the Republic the same political and industrial unity which the trans-continental roads have given to the United States. In the eighties, while the Mexican Central was building, Gen. Palmer proposed to connect the Denver & Rio Grande with a system of 36-inch roads from Laredo southward into Mexico, then called the Mexican National. It was designed to perform the same service for mines in the mountain districts of northeastern Mexico as his roads were giving to Colorado miners. His complete programme was never carried out, and the Mexican National has since been converted into a broad gauge and become government property. Another railroad crossing the frontier into Mexico was built in that same early period by Mr. Huntington to connect his Southern Pacific at Eagle Pass with the coal mines of

Coahuila. This has been extended to Torreon, the City of Durango, and the City of Mesris, and now forms one of the members of the combination of railroads controlled and operated by the Government as the National Railways of Mexico. At present, besides the Southern Pacific system, Stillwell's Orient Road is designed to connect Kansas City, through Chihuahua, with Topolobampo, on the Pacific, and meanwhile a company is, with America, Canadian and English capital, carrying out Mr. Greene's railroad and lumbering schemes in the Sierra Madre on a most extensive scale.

Of the 24,142 kilometers of steam railroad already constructed in Mexico, not including private roads, only 2,800 kilometers have been built by European capital, 1,530 kilometers by the Mexican Government or native corporations, and the balance, say 19,000 kilometers, have been built by American capital. But though the Government built less than 2,000 kilometers, they now control no less than 11,828 kilometers, or nearly one-half of the total mileage, and operate all the roads they control, with slight exceptions.

Like the Government of Belgium and some other European states, the Mexican Government grants to the concessionaire simply a lease of their own road for one hundred years. The road bed and all immovable property then passes into the possession of the Government, the rolling stock alone to be paid for on a valuation. Now, the policy of the Government seems to be to obtain control of all the principal rail-

road thoroughfares in advance of the expiry of the concessions, and as the terms they have offered to the security holders of such roads as have already been acquired are fair and even liberal, not only has the transfer been made, without exciting friction or discontent, but the transaction has accentuated the confidence of foreign capitalists in the good faith of the Government and the security of their investments.

Under the terms of the merger, arrangement has been made by which the bonds will be redeemed before the expiration of the concession, through a sinking fund. But the value of the stock expires with the concession, when in any case the stock would be almost worthless.

According to the Mexican Journal of Commerce, the foreign capital invested in Mexican railroads up to the end of 1903 was $767,151,848, Mexican currency. Although at present this must be divided nearly by half, owing to the depreciation in silver, much of the money was expended when silver was $1.29. Of that large total, 80 per cent. is assumed to have been contributed by the United States. Since that date the Southern Pacific of Mexico has embarked on its vast scheme of railroad construction, which it is estimated will cost $70,000,000 in gold.

The South American Journal, published in London, states that the investments of British capital have reached £139,247,661, or, say, $690,000,000, of which, however, about one-half is in Government Bonds. Mexican railroads owned by British companies have

issued £17,308,000 of securities, and on railroads owned and controlled by the Mexican Government over £37,000,000 have been expended. Of British and Canadian capital, there is said to have been invested in street railroads, power plants, ranches, and other industrial enterprises, £14,510,741, and it is proposed to invest not less than £10,000,000 in Chihuahua lumber and railroad schemes.

The advantages of the freest interchange of capital between countries in return for national products, and for providing means for industrial development, are generally admitted, and most communities, if they have neither the money nor the skill to utilize their resources, rejoice if foreigners enter and aid them, provided the foreigners, in so doing, obey the law. But there are national susceptibilities as well as statutory laws, which must be observed if foreign money and foreign skill and influence are to be welcomed in a foreign country. If we compare the conditions of industrial life in the United States and in Mexico, we will recognize striking differences which may require special treatment.

The investment of foreign capital in national companies under the management of natives and employing native labor can be regarded only as beneficial to the country receiving it. Nor need it give rise to jealousy. Enormous amounts of money are sought for and transmitted from England, France and Germany, to be employed in building railroads and in conducting industrial enterprises in the United States.

But with few exceptions the management is exclusively in American hands, and the law forbids the importation of contract labor. In Mexico the conditions are the reverse. Until recently the railroads were owned by foreign corporations—their boards were composed of foreigners and the best paid posts both in the administrative and the operating departments were filled by foreigners. Under such circumstances —if from no other consideration—it was a wise measure of Señor Limantour to acquire the North and South trunk roads and to control most of the other principal highways of traffic. In a prospectus of the "National Railways of Mexico," Mr. Bennett, the Vice-President, says that "the Company now owns by direct ownership the properties formerly known as the Mexican Central Railway Company, Ltd., National Railroad Company of Mexico, and Hidalgo and North-Eastern Railroad Company, Limited; and controls through stock ownership the Mexican International Railroad Company, the Interoceanic Railway of Mexico (Acapulco to Vera Cruz), Ltd., the Texas-Mexican Railway and the Mexican Pacific Railway Company, and the total mileage is 6,987 miles."

The action of the Federal administration and the National Congress, in forestalling the acquisition of the railroads by the country in advance of the termination of their franchises, is in response to a pronounced national movement which is not anti-foreign, but *pro patria*. The Government does not wish to arrest the flow of foreign capital into the country,

but desires to secure Mexican co-operation in the development not only of the means of transportation but of the nation's natural resources. There is no reason why Mexican mining companies, for instance—not foreign companies, with a protocolized dummy Mexican corporation, but actual Mexican companies, with Mexicans as well as foreigners on the boards—should not in time be organized and operated. Mexican methods would naturally have to be brought into closer harmony with foreign methods than they are to-day before that consummation is reached, but it would be desirable, when mining properties are sold by Mexicans to foreigners, that the value of the mines should be taken in stock by the owners. Thus native knowledge of the laws and habits of the country in which the property exists would supplement in the general management the business methods and technical skill provided by the stock owned by the foreign capital.

Meanwhile, however, both on the railroads and in the mines and smelting works, preference should always be given to native labor. There is a dearth of technical skill in Mexico, but Mexican youths can be rapidly trained into good technical workers. As little foreign labor as possible, either manual, technical or clerical, should be employed. Foreign labor always commands a higher wage than is paid for similar work done by Mexicans, and till the Mexican is trained to the level of imported workmen, the Mexican deserves less. But it is an invidious distinction,

however real; and it inevitably creates heartburning and discontent. On railroads, native employees can fill a much wider sphere than they generally do. As train hands they are apt, and obedient to orders, and as locomotive engineers and firemen they show distinct mechanical instincts.

They are fearless and brave. On a narrow gauge line between the Pilares Mine and the works at Placerita, in Sonora, a Mexican engineer, Jesus Garcia, with a Mexican crew, in the employ of the Moctezuma Copper Co., was hauling open cars loaded with dynamite. When on a grade near the town of Nacozari, boxes containing the dynamite were discovered to be on fire. Anxious to pull the train to a safe distance from the town, he turned on steam. Not a man left his post till Garcia, seeing that the brakesmen could not avert the catastrophe, ordered them to jump. He, however, remained on the locomotive, and with his hand on the throttle was blown into atoms, meeting a fate he knew to be inevitable, but which he was willing to suffer in order to save others. He was only a Mexican *peon*, but he represented the stolid bravery of the race, which, moreover, is not lacking in intelligence, and which, under just and firm guidance, can be educated to occupy any position which men of other nationalities of the same training can fill. As a miner the Mexican possesses manual dexterity of a high order, but it requires time to eradicate the old habits of mine working, which he and his forebears have acquired through

generations of practice. Around a furnace he is at home. Like all dwellers in a tropical or semi-tropical clime, he has never felt the necessity of steady work, and therefore has never habituated himself to it; but he rapidly learns to discard sandals and wear shoes, and to imitate the higher standards of living of his northern fellow-workers. He soon learns that to maintain that position he must make money and work steadily. He therefore abandons his erratic habits. If the managers of foreign companies would temporarily submit to some inconvenience and annoyance, involved in employing more Mexicans and fewer foreign workmen, they would before long not only find it to be to their profit, but they would help to alleviate the smouldering feeling of jealousy and dread which can be used so widely and successfully by such agitators as wish to use the *pro patria* movement for political purposes.

There is no denying that a dread of the overwhelming strength of the United States has always possessed the Mexican mind. Don Pablo Macedo, in his chapter on Railroads, tells us of the conferences which preceded the adoption of the railroad policy in Mexico. He says: "In deciding on the gauge the truth is that the question was discussed, whether or not they should accept the gauge adopted by their neighbours of the Northern Republic. It was a consideration of the gravest moment, and transcended all others. No one, and still less statesmen of the status of Señor Lerdo de Tejada, has ever been blind

to the danger that we run from the nearness of our colossal neighbors on the north. In comparison with the United States—more's the pity—we must confess that we then figured, and we still do, as a mere pigmy. Besides this the sad memory of the iniquitous war of 1847, which cost us the half of our territory, is more than enough cause to excite uneasiness and even dread. Such apprehension is certainly not unreasonable or groundless. As a consequence, the distinct object of our international policy has necessarily always been, in the first place, to grow by natural expansion, to fortify our national organisms, and then to seek from the other side of the Atlantic a support which alone can be efficacious by creating, acclimatizing and strengthening European interests and elements. Unfortunately, the unjustifiable French interventions, obliging us to sustain a war *à l'outrance* in order to preserve our very existence as a nation, interrupted our organic development, and not only weakened our position physically, through the material sacrifices which we had to make, but morally, by creating divisions greater than had previously existed. The blood of Maximilian created an abyss between Europe and Mexico. His death, though it may have been the only means, sad as it was, of securing internal peace, estranged the sympathies of those nations which then exercised preponderating influence in Europe." (*La Evolucion Mercantil por Pablo Macedo*, page 199.)

The above extract probably expresses correctly the prevalent feeling among the educated classes in the

past and in the present. And it is they alone who can exert political power; for though the franchise is universal, under the Constitution of 1857 and the electoral law of 1901, the vote is really cast by an electoral college, composed of one elector for each 500 inhabitants, and the members cannot be supposed to know the wishes of their constituents as distinctly as those who meet to vote for the President of this country.

Universal suffrage, therefore, in Mexico does not voice the popular will as distinctly as it does in this country; but from one motive or another there is an almost universal and reasonable dread of offending this country, under the belief that the consequences might be disagreeable and fall with lightning speed. For every citizen of the United States who enters the Republic for the transaction of business or to engage in industrial pursuits, through some indiscretion of his own or through some arbitrary act of an over-zealous Mexican official, may give rise to international complications. These risks are greater by far in a sparsely settled country like Mexico than in a land where the provincial government is thoroughly organized and under strict control of the central power; and it is difficult to maintain perfect order and to mete out perfect justice where the officials cannot possibly be men trained for their posts.

In this rapid influx of foreign capital, under foreign management, the Mexican sees therefore cause for anxiety which is in itself a source of danger; and it cannot be wondered at if their sensitiveness is in-

creased by the memory of the original Texas difficulty, and the fact that till recently the border population from the Atlantic to the Pacific, possessed of irresistible energy, found vent for it sometimes in eccentric enterprises which were not suggested by the State Department. Most wars have originated in trade disputes or commercial jealousy; and so ready are our frontiersmen to avenge any injury or insult that they have not waited for declarations of war before taking the law into their own hands. There have been instances even recently where armed bands have crossed the line to forcibly maintain what they conceived or at any rate claimed to be their rights. Besides which, there are people—presumably well intentioned—north of the line, who, comparing political conditions in their own country with those prevailing in Mexico, consider that interference in favor of their neighbours is a duty. They do not always weigh the difference in the habits and education of the voters, which this arbitrary boundary divides; and that truer liberty may coincide with limited rather than with unlimited franchise during a certain stage of a people's social and political development.

It must be admitted that life and property are safe in Mexico to an eminent degree, considering the difficulty of policing such a rugged country, inhabited by a scanty and scattered population. Foreigners have certainly had no reason to complain of ill-treatment, nor of such arbitrary methods being practised against them as it is deemed necessary to the public safety

whether, wisely or not, to inflict on natives who break or are suspected of breaking the law. The greatest reserve, therefore, in speech and action should, as a matter of courtesy, be maintained by those who enjoy the privilege and hospitality, so liberally extended to strangers and to their capital. Moreover, the resident from abroad in a foreign land, who imports, together with his capital and skill, his native prejudices and points of view, is often ill-fitted to be a just judge of the virtues and defects of the strange people and their stranger customs, into contact with which he is thus temporarily and seldom intimately thrown

JAMES DOUGLAS.

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